

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 CU-02 OMB-01 /056 W

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R 101036Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8987

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 19287

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH, SGEN

SUBJ: THE MONKS RALLY CONTINUES

REF: A) 19239; B) 19138

1. THE BUDDHIST ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL IS APPARENTLY HAVING AS MUCH TROUBLE TRYING TO REIGN IN ACTIVIST MONKS AS THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS HAD WITH ACTIVIST STUDENTS. THE MONKS RALLY AT THE PRAMEN GROUNDS HAS NOT FIZZLED OUT. IT CONTINUES NOW INTO ITS TENTH DAY IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THE NOVEMBER FARMERS RALLY DID-WITH LITTLE APPARENT PUBLIC SUPPORT.

2. THE NUMBERS OF MONKS RALLYING TO THE CAUSE HAS NOW REACHED AT LEAST 60. MOREOVER, THE BANGKOK POST REPORTS ON DECEMBER 10 THAT MAHA CHAT KONGSUK AND SOME 200 OTHER MONKS HAVE SET UP A BUDDHIST FEDERATION, THE OBJECTIVE OF WHICH IS TO RESTORE UNITY (SIC) WITHIN THE BUDDHIST CHURCH. THE PRO-TESTORS, WHO NOW NUMBER ABOUT 400, ARE ATTACKING THE ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL AND ACCUSING IT OF DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR MONKS. THEY ARE ALSO CALLING FOR AN OVERHAUL OF THE PRESENT BUDDHIST ADMINISTRATION WHICH THEY CLAIM IS TYRANNICAL.

3. COMMENT: THE RALLY IS THUS FAR AN UNSPECTACULAR AFFAIR WITH LITTLE APPARENT SUPPORT FROM THE GENERAL

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PUBLIC. BUT IT REVEALS EACH DAY MORE OF THE NATURE AND

SCOPE OF DIVISION AND DISSENSION WITHIN THE BUDDHIST ORDER. THE CURRENT ISSUE IS LESS THE ORIGINAL EXPULSION OF MAHA CHAT KONGSUK FROM WAT DUSITTARAM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE FARMERS RALLY THAN WITH REFORM IN THE BUDDHIST ORDER ITSELF. THUS FAR NONE OF THE MAJOR ACTIVISTS, LIKE SEKSAN PRASOETKUN OR THIRAYUT BUNMI, HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE RALLY.

MASTERS

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NNN

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